





NO. 1. EAST GRANARY FROM SOUTH-EAST.



NO. 2. SITE XI. THE "FORUM," WEST WALL.

THE CORBRIDGE EXCAVATIONS, 1908.

By W. H. KNOWLES, F.S.A, and R. H. FORSTER, M.A, LL.B.

As in 1907, these excavations were continued from July to early in October, but with much more important results than were obtained in the previous year. It is true that nothing of quite so striking a character as the Corbridge lion was unearthed, but the hoard of gold coins, found towards the end of the season, is of great numismatic and historical importance; the buildings disclosed far exceed in size and workmanship anything previously discovered on the site; the coin series has been very largely augmented and the list of potters' marks has been considerably increased. Besides these additions, other objects of various kinds have substantially swelled the collection which will, it is hoped, one day be housed in an adequate museum on some part of the site of the Roman city.

In the account of the excavations of 1907, mention was made¹ of a broad paved street, on the south side of which stood the pottery shop and other buildings (see site plan, fig. 1). The work of 1908 was carried out on the north side of this street, where the excavations of the previous year had indicated the existence of important remains. It is not too much to say that the hopes raised by the discovery in 1907 of the structure known as the "fountain," and the inscription to Antoninus Pius, have been completely realized by the investigations made during 1908. The building, in front of which the inscription was found (see plan, fig. 2), has been completely excavated, and proves to be a granary of large size and excellent workmanship, measuring internally 86 feet from north to south, by 25 feet 6 inches in width. It is heavily buttressed on the east, north, and west sides, and had its entrance to the south, where the building abuts on the

¹ *Archaeological Journal*, xlv, 122.

street already referred to. The flagged floor was supported on the insets of the main walls, and on eight parallel dwarf walls, which run the length of the building and are interrupted by six cross passages, thus forming

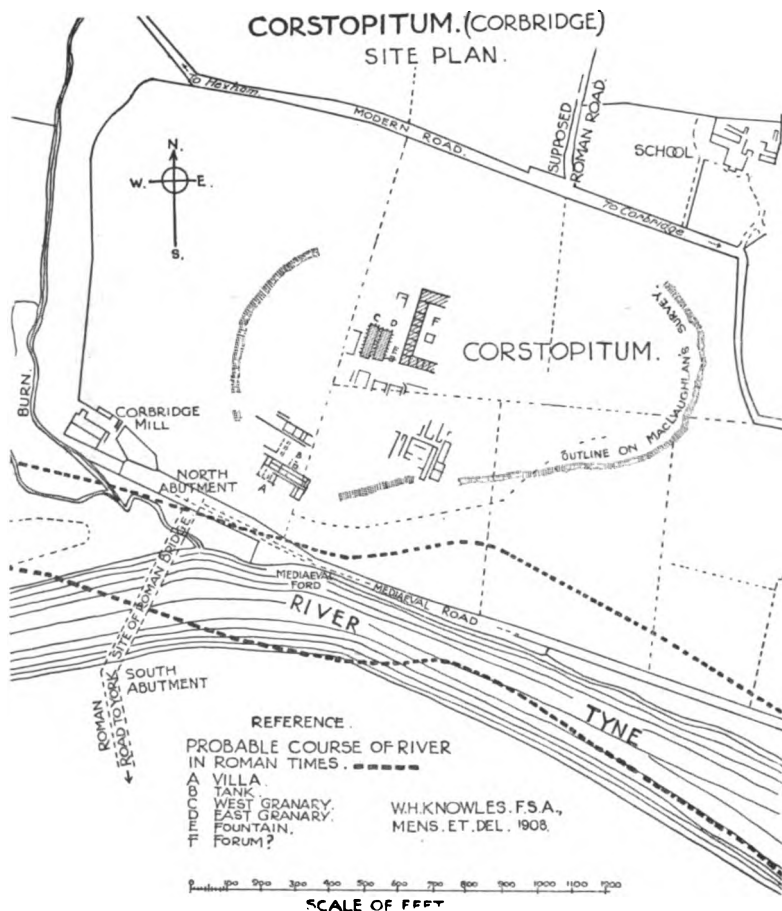


FIG. I. SITE PLAN.

an efficient ventilation space for the purpose of keeping the main floor dry and cool. Into this space the air was introduced by splayed openings between the buttresses of the east and west sides, and these openings, which are over two feet high and nearly a foot wide, have been divided by chamfered stone mullions, one of

which, 5 inches across, was found *in situ*, and is perhaps without parallel in Romano-British work (fig. 3).

The main walls consist of a core of hard rubble concrete, which in many places is still standing six feet high, enclosed on each face with ashlar of excellent quality. This has been largely removed, but fine examples of it remain in certain parts, especially at the south end of the east wall, and in the centre compartment of the north wall; in the latter place it is still perfect to a height of about six feet. The adjacent north-east corner, notwithstanding its apparent strength, was in

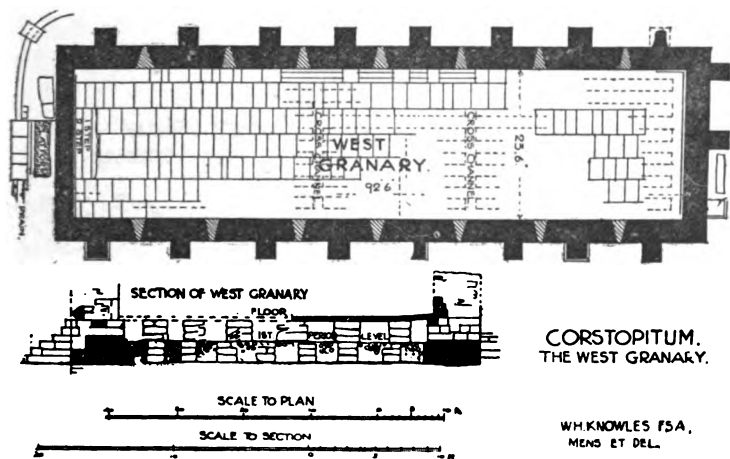


FIG. 2.

Roman times strengthened by a heavy angle buttress, the walling at the point being six inches out of the perpendicular. Down the centre of the interior of the building there is a series of heavy square stone bases, supported by masonry, which at each point interrupts the central channel of the ventilation space beneath the floor. These seem to have been surmounted by columns, which may have supported the roof, or, more probably, an upper floor; but whether the columns were of stone or timber, it is impossible to say with any certainty. A loading platform of masonry was found in front of the centre of the south wall. If the inscription found last

year may be considered to be a record of the erection of this granary, the building was constructed in A.D. 140.

Contiguous to the west side of this granary, indeed in several cases the buttresses touch, are the remains of another building of the same character, but possibly of earlier date (fig. 1, c). It is slightly longer and slightly narrower than the other, measuring 92 feet 6 inches by 23 feet 6 inches, and has had no columns in the centre; but its foundations are laid at a lower level, and at some date subsequent to its original construction its floor has been raised, the later level being the same as

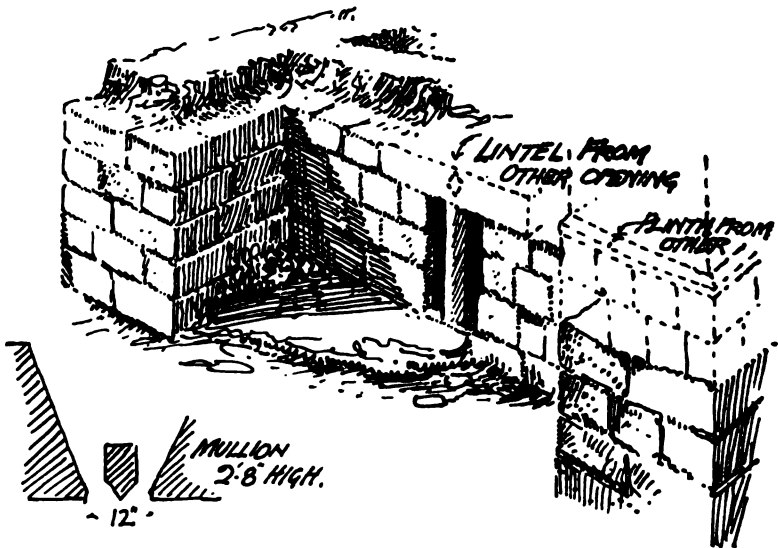


FIG. 3. SPLOYED OPENING IN WALL OF WEST GRANARY.

the floor level of the granary to the east. The earlier floor had been supported on a series of seven parallel dwarf walls, forming channels which were ventilated by splayed openings on the east and west sides. At a later date these channels were filled up with large river pebbles; the whole was covered with a thin layer of clay, and on this was built a series of six dwarf walls for the support of the new floor, new ventilation openings being constructed above, but in at least one case not immediately over the old, which were partially walled up. Before this was done, however, the sill of the doorway at the

south end seems to have been raised, and two steps were introduced on the inner side, descending from the raised sill to the old floor level. In front of the door was a loading platform of masonry.

On the west side of the granary was a street, which like most of the streets so far examined, seems to have been twice raised. To the west of it were the remains of a building of a comparatively late date and poor quality, the south end of which had been repaired, probably during the latest period of occupation, with re-used material; but the site had been in use, apparently as an open space or yard, long before any building had been erected on it.

Along the eastern side of the east granary a broad street runs north and south; but where it joins the east and west street, discovered in 1907, it narrows sharply, about half its breadth being occupied by the site of the "fountain" (fig. 1, c). This remarkable structure was again uncovered, but practically no fresh light was thrown on the problems it presents, excepting that several dovetailed sinkings on adjoining stones were examined, and appear to have been filled with cement only, and not to have held lead, or iron cramps. A small fragment of another Twentieth Legion inscription was found on the site.

The street just mentioned has been twice raised, and at the same time narrowed. At the date of one of these raisings, probably the first, a rough, battered retaining-wall was constructed on the west side, apparently to keep the filling from blocking up the ventilation openings on the east side of the adjacent granary. Another street ran past the north ends of the two granaries and joined this north and south street, but continued no further. The area to the east is occupied by a building which, in extent and massiveness, must have surpassed the two granaries together (fig. 1, f). Indeed, its extent is yet undetermined, as the eastern limit of the reserved area was reached without finding any indications of its east wall.

It has been styled the "forum," but until its excavation is completed, the name must be taken merely as a term of convenience. Speaking generally, it has been a building of square or oblong shape, the western side of which measures 221 feet, while the north and south sides have been traced for nearly half that distance, without finding

any trace of a main entrance, which we should expect to have stood in the centre of the south front. Unfortunately, the building has suffered very severely, and in some cases even the foundation course has disappeared; but a considerable portion of the west wall is still standing four courses high, and forms one of the most remarkable examples of Roman masonry to be seen in the country (plate I, no. 2).

On a heavy, plain foundation course, consisting of two parallel stones, with a gap of varying breadth between them, stands a course, about fifteen inches high, with a bold torus moulding to the outer and rustic dressing on the inner side: this is succeeded by two courses of almost the same thickness with rustic dressing on both faces. In each of these three courses the stones run through the entire thickness of the wall, namely, two feet six inches. The rustic bosses vary in size and projection, and the chiselled margins which separate them are in some cases half on each of two adjoining blocks, and in others wholly on one. From the inner side of the main west wall a series of cross-walls, of similar but slightly less massive masonry, project eastwards for twenty feet, forming a range of small courts or enclosures, with an average width of seventeen feet. These courts are bounded on the east by a continuous foundation course resembling that of the west wall, which appears to have carried no superstructure except where the ends of the cross-walls rest upon it. These ends are T-shaped, and form the jambs of openings about thirteen feet wide. In many cases the cross-walls are only traceable by the foundation courses, but some stand two or three courses high and two feet thick.

A range of similar courts seems to have existed along the south side of the building, but here the destruction has been more complete. It was possible, however, to plan them by tracing the layer of clay and cobbles where the foundation course had been removed. In one, which had a pavement of flags covered with a thin layer of *opus signinum*, about forty voussoirs were discovered: they were eighteen inches wide and of various heights, having apparently belonged to several distinct but similar arches. Probably they had been collected here in post-Roman

times, possibly when Wilfrid was building his minster at Hexham, and never carted away.

The foundation of the north wall of the building was traced as far as the eastern limit of the excavations, and probably a range of small courts existed on this side also, unless indeed this end of the building was never finished. The foundation course lay at a depth of over seven feet from the present surface, and the complete clearance of this part of the site was too costly to be undertaken.

The central space, on which these ranges of courts opened, appears to have been a large quadrangle. In it, near the west range of courts, were found the remains of a building about twenty feet square, with post-holes in the east and west walls; the north and south walls were of later date and poorer construction. Traces of other foundations exist to the east, south, and west of this building, but it seems probable that they belonged to structures which were removed when the site was cleared for the erection of the "forum." The walls with post-holes, which have been put together with very hard mortar, may possibly also belong to this earlier date. In tracing the old foundations eastward, two cruciform Anglo-Saxon *fibulae* were found at a considerable depth, and in an excellent state of preservation.

The area north of the granaries was explored, but though the disturbed soil was of some depth, only a single small building of late date was found in this quarter. It appeared to have been used as some kind of smithy or work-shop, and at the back of what had evidently been a small furnace or oven was found the hoard of gold coins which has attracted so much attention. The hoard was enclosed in a piece of sheet lead, and consisted of a gold ring, from which the stone had been removed, and forty-eight gold coins in perfectly fresh condition. The coins were minted under the following emperors :

VALENTINIAN I.	4
VALENS	2
GRATIAN	16
VALENTINIAN II.	8
THEODOSIUS	5
MAGNUS MAXIMUS	13

It is probable that the hoard was deposited about the year A.D. 383. According to Mr. H. H. E. Craster, they may be ranged between the inclusive dates 370–385. The coins weigh about sixty-five grains each, which is below the standard of 70.22 grains required by the edict of Constantine in 312. Of the number forty-three were minted at Trier, two in Rome and one in Constantinople. Lyons and London are not represented.

The other finds made during the season are of great variety and interest. The architectural fragments are numerous and of some merit. The remains of sculpture include a curious panel with a rayed head, apparently a representation of a sun-god; a large panel with a male figure holding a horse under a temple; another male figure with a rayed crown, riding on a winged horse; a relief of a spearman and horse, which has unfortunately been broken in two to form walling stones (plate II, no. 1); a large altar, in two pieces, was found in front of the west granary: the upper half is much worn, and the names of the deity and dedicator are lost; but enough of the inscription is left to show that the latter was **PRAEPOSITUS CURAM AGENS HORREI**¹ **TEMPORE EXPEDITIONIS FELICISSIMAE BRITANNICAE** (plate II, no. 2).

Pottery of many kinds was very abundant, though few complete vessels were recovered; but so far it has afforded practically no evidence of the occupation of the site prior to the second century. The evidence of the coins is much to the same effect, and two hoards of burnt bronze coins confirm the supposition, based on similar discoveries in 1907, that a serious fire occurred about the year A.D. 340.

According to Professor Meek, the animal remains were numerous and interesting, and afforded specimens of red deer, sheep, pig, dog, duck, goose, grouse and partridge. He adds that “the *bos taurus*, var. *longifrons* is well represented, and the remains show that it was liable to a great degree of variation. In certain cases the animals could not have been much less in size than the present day shorthorn, though the majority were about the size of the Chillingham cattle of the present time. One skull is interesting, as it belongs to a race which must have existed

¹ Or perhaps *horreorum*. In the inscription the word is abbreviated to (*b*) *ORR*.



NO. 1. FRAGMENTS OF PANEL FROM SITE XII.



NO. 2. ALTAR FOUND IN FRONT OF
WEST GRANARY.



in prehistoric times, a small race of about Chillingham size. It is possible that it may have been living wild, and that it, or a near ally, survives at Chillingham. At all events, in one or two cases a lower jaw was found among the remains, which had the Chillingham character, namely, the absence of the first premolar."

Owing to the generosity of Captain J. H. Cuthbert, D.S.O, the owner of the site, the two granaries, the "fountain," and the "forum" have been left uncovered, and will be open for inspection when work is resumed in the coming summer.